

Message

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Sent: 3/6/2020 12:54:47 AM
To: Sethuraman, Jag [Sethuraman.Jag@epa.gov]; Gregory Sopkin (sopkin.gregory@epa.gov) [sopkin.gregory@epa.gov]
CC: O'Connor, Darcy [oconnor.darcy@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Water Division All Hands - TP ideas and agenda
Attachments: 2020 03 12 WD All Hands Meeting Agenda.docx

Greg and Jag attached is the agenda for the WD All Hands scheduled for next Thursday from 11-1. Jag, please note that you are on the agenda for a self-introduction. It would be great if you could stay through the pizza break. Darcy provided the following list of CWA activities for you to draw from. I would recommend selecting a few that you can reflect on through your direct experience with staff and provide additional high level comments in support of all the great work done by the water program.

High Level Comments

- Clean water and safe drinking water are of critical importance to public health and environmental protection.
- I am keenly aware of the many complex issues you are working on and appreciate the exceptional briefings and patience you have shown getting me up to speed.
- Water Management Division employees have consistently impressed me with their level of knowledge, strong work ethic, delivery of excellent work products and passion for their work. Let me provide a few examples. {select a few examples from the list below to delve into }.
- There are many more specific examples. (consider rambling of titles but not going into any detail).
- I also want to acknowledge the extensive amount of work you do on a day-to-day basis to implement the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. In addition to the specific issues I mentioned, it too is critically important to fulfilling our mission. Thank you.

Select a few from the following:

Clean Water Branch Activities – CWA technical experts helping to protect water quality and the environment through creative, innovative, and cooperative approaches

- **Transboundary Water Protection** The Water Division has been a leader in transboundary water quality issues, especially related to pollution in Montana in the Kootenai watershed and Lake Koocanusa attributed to mining in British Columbia. In FY19, the Water Division accomplished a significant milestone by successfully facilitating collaborative transboundary monitoring.
- **MT General Variance** – work with HQs and MT to determine a path forward on the litigation and state options to make progress on nutrient reductions.
- **Water Quality Standards and TMDLs** – the teams have done a great job acting on state standards/TMDL packages and meeting our statutory time lines for actions.
- **West Davis Project** (Example of the 404 program collaboration with the Corp to decrease the wetland impacts from a project)
This is a transportation/road expansion project along the Great Salt Lake. The EPA had concerns about the potential impacts to wetlands and requested to remain involved in the project (utilizing the 404 'Q' process). The project impacts have been significantly decreased and EPA expects the Corps to provide the Notice of Intent to issue the 404 permit within the next few weeks.

- **South Dakota Tour** (Example of Innovative Funding being used to fund an innovative and successful project)
The RA, with EPA and State DENR toured several sites in South Dakota including a state NPS project in the Big Sioux River and Skunk Creek Watersheds. (eastern South Dakota). The South Dakota 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution funds were paired with Clean Water State Revolving funds from the City of Sioux Falls to implement a practice that improved water quality and led to removing the waterbodies from impaired status for Total Suspended Solids. This practice, known as Seasonal Riparian Area Management (SRAM), allows landowners to graze the area during part of the year, and restricting their access during times that are key for maintaining water quality.
- **Lagoon optimization trainings** – (Example of creative solution to address an intractable problem without costly capital improvements)
With small amounts of funding, lagoon operators are trained on how to ‘dial in’ their treatment which can dramatically decrease nutrient loads without investments in additional treatment technology.
- **Aethon permit comments** – (Example of EPA’s technical comments helping the state avoid legal vulnerability)
Comments on the permit by EPA ultimately improved the permit and decreased the vulnerability to legal challenge.
- **Soil Health Symposium** – (Example of a way to address NPS concerns associated with agriculture that will be implemented by ag because of the benefits to the farmer). EPA hosted a soil health symposium, bringing in technical experts to educate internal and external to the Agency.

Safe Drinking Water Branch Work/Accomplishments:

Denver Water Variance – approved a first in the nation approach to permanently remove the major source of lead in drinking water for the Denver Metro area, protecting over 1.4 million people (more on the variance and cross program collaboration below).

Crow Tribe Drinking Water – continuing to work with the tribe, IHS and enforcement to ensure safe drinking water for the community.

DW Operator Training and Compliance Assistance – Since late September 2019, R8 drinking water staff have participated in 6 operator trainings reaching over 900 operators in R8! They have also work worked with technical assistance providers such as Rural and held 2 webinars on lead in schools. The team also provided its yearly compliance assistance packages to all of the systems in the region (nearly 1,000) to ensure that systems understand the requirements and have the tools to provide safe drinking water.

Significant deficiencies – the drinking water team has been working with water system operators to correct significant deficiencies, or potential pathways for contamination to enter the system. This is the #1 health-based violation across systems in R8, and the #2 most common health-based violation nationally. So far based on their efforts, the DW team has seen a decrease of over 80 SDs compared to this time last year.

WY Class VI primacy package – staff and management completed significant work with WY and HQs as WY developed its rules and working w/HQs on an aggressive action time ine.

Dewey Burdock Uranium In-situ Project in South Dakota – UIC program and programs throughout the region (ORC, ECAD, EJ, TAB) continue to work on the UIC permits and aquifer exemptions for the controversial project, including extensive tribal consultation.

UIC Permit timeliness – The UIC team has done a great job working with EPA HQ and operators to streamline the permitting process, and have been able to meet the 180 day deadline for many new permit applications.

Projects that require both SDWA and CWA expertise to solve:

- **Denver Water Variance** – EPA employees from the SDWA and CWA programs partnered to build a win/win solution that increased protections to the public while protecting the South Platte from additional nutrient pollution. The EPA partners worked with Denver Water and environmental groups to develop a solution that protects public health and the environment. The solution addresses the potential of lead in drinking water by utilizing a combination of treatment/home water filters/lead service line removal Instead of the alternate which is the addition of orthophosphate. Concern that orthophosphate will ultimately be discharged to surface waters, increasing nutrient loads.
- **PFAS** – This is a drinking water and a clean water issue where we don't have an answer yet, but need experts from both sides of the house if we expect to solve. There is a panel addressing the all hands later in the program and they will provide more information.